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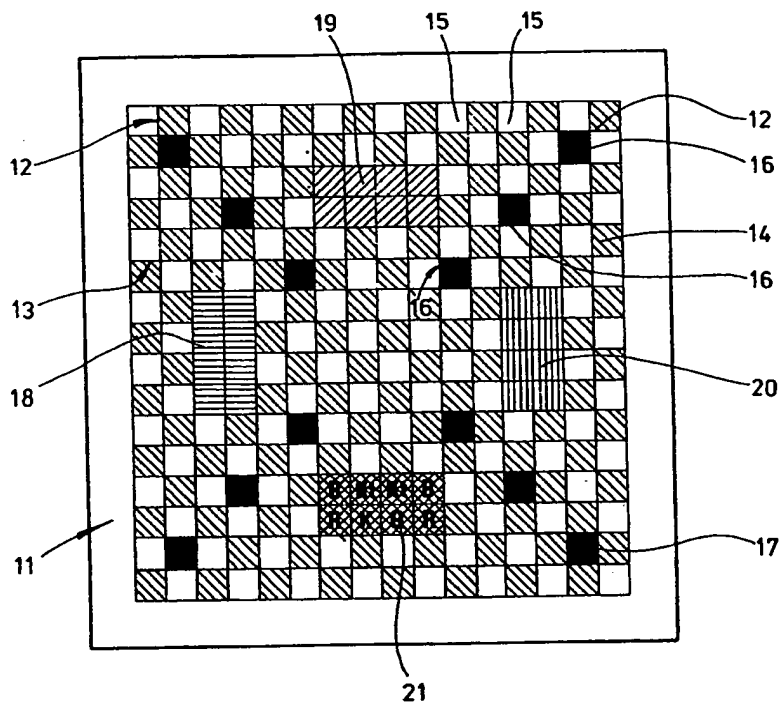
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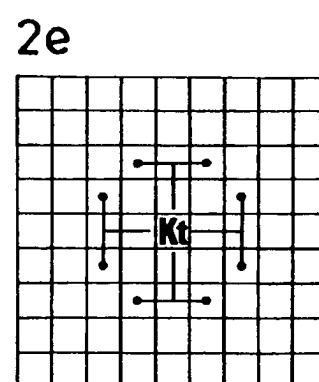
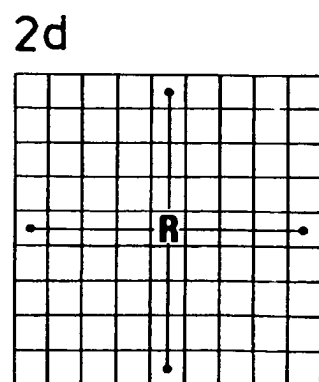
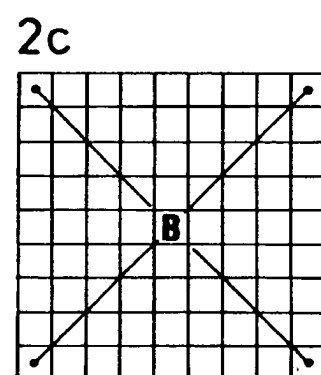
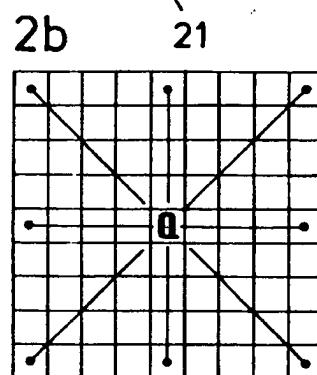
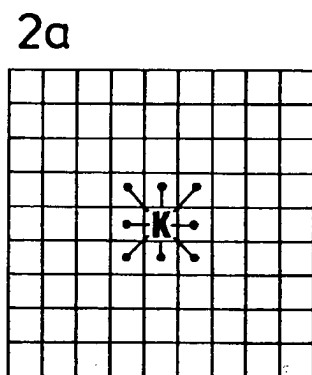
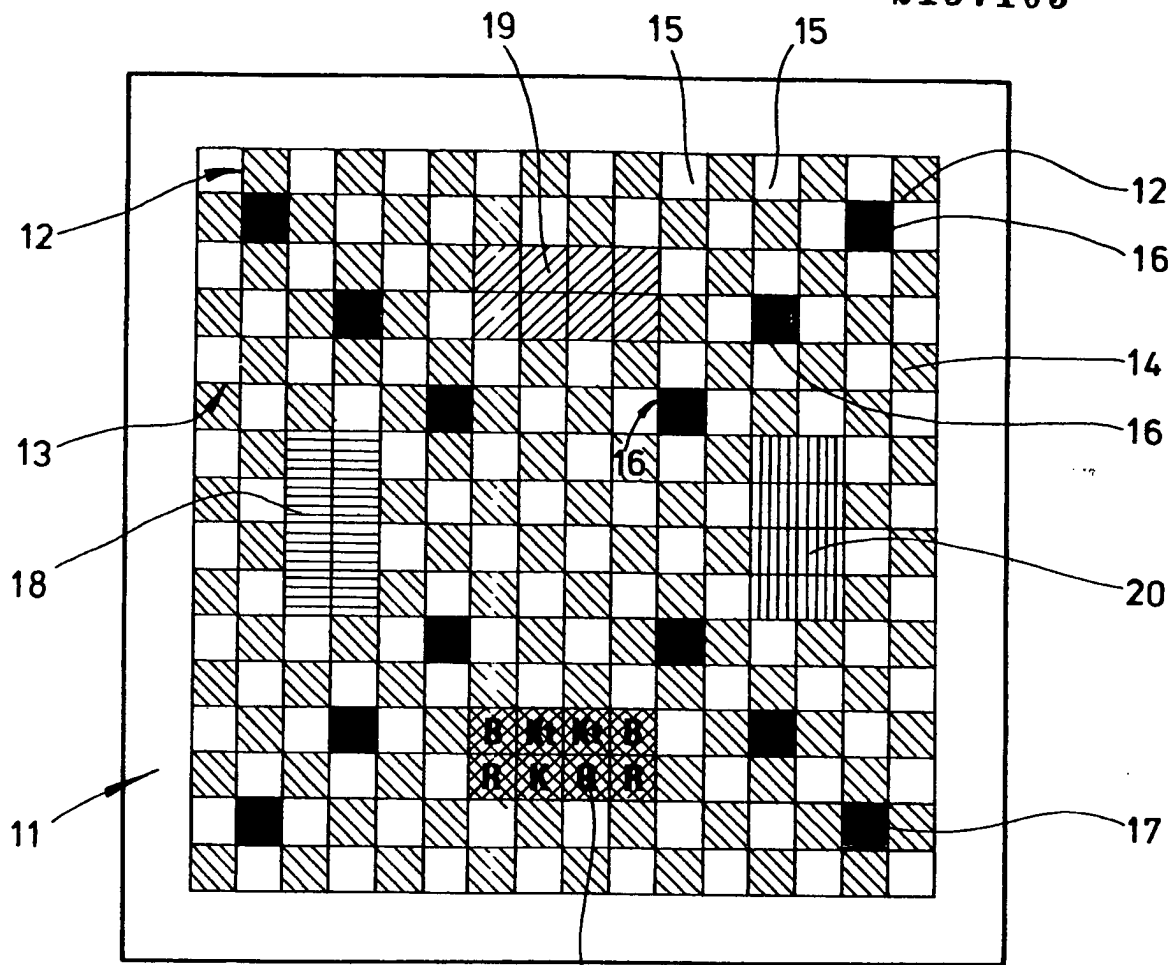
(58) Field of search
A6H

(54) Board Game Apparatus

(57) The apparatus comprises a chequered board having 256 squares, four defined areas on the board, each comprising eight squares 18, 19, 20, 21, and differently marked squares 16 along diagonals of the board. Player's pieces may be conventional chess pieces.



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SPECIFICATION A Board Game

The present invention relates to a board game, and particularly, although not exclusively, to a
5 board game which is playable by four players and which can make use of conventional chess men as players pieces.

Although the game of chess is widely known and extremely popular it has the limitation of
10 being restricted to only two players and has the disadvantage, as far as young players are concerned, of having rather complex rules which are somewhat difficult to understand. The present invention seeks, therefore, to provide a board
15 game which can employ some of the conventional chess men and which is provided with rules and a board which enable a simpler and more easily grasped game to be played, and which can also be played with two, three or four players.

20 According to the present invention a board game comprises a board marked out so as to have a plurality of player's positions identified by intersecting lines and a plurality of different player's pieces to be moved over the board in
25 accordance with the rules of the game, each different player's piece being assigned a characteristic move, the board being further marked with at least two areas within its boundary constituting starting positions for each
30 of at least two sets of player's pieces and target areas for the opponent, the rules providing that each set of player's pieces is to be moved alternately by means of the said characteristic moves, from its starting position to the target
35 position, the winner being the player to move all his pieces onto the target area first.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention the intersecting lines defining the player's position define a plurality of square or rectangular areas
40 (hereinafter referred to as "squares" regardless of their precise shape) in a grid or chequered array with adjacent squares being of different colour or being otherwise distinguishable. Conventionally a grid of squares marked out by two orthogonal
45 sets of parallel lines is separated into two sets of squares by a contrasting colour. The conventional chess board has 64 squares thus marked but no other indicia or markings on the board. By contrast, the board of the present invention is
50 marked with starting and target areas (which may be one and the same for opposing sides) which are spaced from the edges of the board allowing player's pieces to be moved to positions entirely around the target area.

55 In playing the game, then, the object is simply to transfer the player's pieces from the starting area on which they are located to the target area which they are assigned. The target area assigned to one player is, in the preferred embodiment, in
60 fact the starting area assigned to an opponent and there may be two, three or four such areas marked on the board. It is preferred, in fact, that the board be marked with four times as many squares as a conventional chess board, namely

65 with a grid of squares having 16 squares along each side, that is 256 squares in all with the target areas spaced by two squares from the board edges.

Although not so limited, the player's pieces
70 may be the conventional chess pieces to which are assigned substantially the same moves as they can make in chess, but with a given limit on a maximum number of squares which can be traversed in one move. Thus, for example, the
75 queen, which in chess can move in an unrestricted manner across the board along any diagonal, row or file may in the game of the present invention be limited to movement in any of these directions, but with a maximum of four
80 squares traversed at one move. The player's pieces, may, of course be different from conventional chess men and have similar characteristic moves such as moves limited to the diagonals, to ranks and/or files, or more complex
85 moves incorporating diagonals and/or rank and file movements such as is provided to the knight in chess.

If chess men are used as the player's pieces, the conventional "high value" chess men, namely
90 the knight, rook, bishop, king and queen are preferably those chosen.

In addition to the target and starting areas the board is preferably additionally marked with a plurality of player's positions as a sub-set of the first defined set of player's positions having a
95 suitable identification such as a characteristic colour or representative indicia, and the rules preferably provide for a variation in the constraint placed on the subsequent move made by a
100 player's piece landing on a square of the sub-set. It is envisaged that this sub-set would incorporate some or all of the squares on the major diagonals, that is the diagonal lines extending from the corners. These may be indicated by a variation in
105 the hue of the square, for example if the otherwise black or darker coloured squares of the diagonal are selected to constitute part of this sub-set the sub-set squares may be indicated with a dark grey or blue colour, or a brown to indicate that they are
110 to be treated differently from the other squares of the set.

Such constraint variations may include the removal of the maximum limit of player's
115 positions or squares which can be traversed at the next move, providing the player's piece is moved on the immediately following turn of the player concerned and/or may include the choice of removing an opponents piece blocking the intended path of the player's piece in question.

120 Such removal, in view of the nature of the game, is not to be viewed as a capture, but simply a displacement of the opponents piece out of the path of the player's piece being moved. The rules may provide that such displacement is to be made
125 to the nearest available square within the ambit of the available range of movements which that piece may make, and in the event of there being two alternative positions the choice of final

position being left to the opponent, that is the player to whom the piece belongs.

Because the game is intended to be played as a manoeuvring game rather than a capturing game the majority of the pieces will not be allocated any right to move onto squares already occupied by an opponents piece. This rule may be varied in the case of the queen, however, and the rules may provide that the queen can move to a square already occupied by an opponents piece, following which that piece is returned to its original starting position thereby acting as a setback to the progress of the player concerned.

One embodiment of the present invention will now be more particularly described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a plan view of a board suitable for playing the game in accordance with the present invention; and

Figures 2a—2e are partial views of a grid of squares constituting part of a board and illustrating the various moves which can be made by the players.

Referring first to Figure 1 the board shown is generally indicated with the reference numeral 11 and is marked out with a chequer board array of squares defined by two sets of parallel lines 12, 13, lines of the two sets being orthogonal to one another. Over the majority of the playing surface the squares identified by the parallel lines 12, 13 are distinguished from one another in that adjacent squares are of contrasting colours whereby to define a first set 14 of dark squares and a second set of light squares 15. In addition to the two sets 14, 15 there is a sub-set 16 of squares which would otherwise belong to the set 14 of dark squares, which are identified by a slightly different colouration, illustrated in Figure 1 by hatching. These sub-set squares 16 are located on the major diagonal of the board occupied by the dark squares, and a similar sub-set of squares 17 is located on the major diagonal occupied by light squares. Alternate squares in the diagonal, apart from the four squares in the central region, thus constitute the sub-set of squares which will be hereinafter termed "the option" squares.

Further, the board is marked with four "stronghold" areas which represent the starting positions of each set of player's pieces and the target positions for the opponents pieces. Again, these may be marked with a suitable characteristic colour, four different colours being required to distinguish them from one another and these colours must be different from those used for the option squares 16, 17 or the dark and light squares 14, 15 respectively. With a board having 256 squares such as that illustrated it is preferred that the stronghold or target areas are positioned two rows or columns in from the edge of the board and centralised on a median line parallel to an edge of the board. Conveniently, for example, such stronghold areas may be identified with red, green, yellow and blue

colours. In Figure 1 these areas have been identified with the reference numerals 18, 19, 20 and 21 respectively. Each stronghold area 18, 19, 20, 21 comprises eight squares in a block of adjacent squares which is sufficient to take the eight major pieces of the chess set, namely two bishops, two knights, two rooks a king and a queen. And these are set out in the two rows as illustrated in Figure 1, namely with a bishop on each of the two "forward" corners of the areas, namely the corners remote from the adjacent side, two knights in the middle of the front row, the king and queen in the middle of the back row and two rooks one at each of the two "rear" corners of the area. Each stronghold area, as well as being identified with its characteristic colour, may also be provided with indicia representing the player's pieces as an aid to the memory of young or new players, although such marking may not prove to be necessary if a suitable diagram is provided with a set of printed rules included with the game.

Finally, the equipment required for playing a game includes a set of "option" tokens which may be any suitable durable markers, for example flat plastics discs of a colour corresponding to that of the option squares. The use of the option tokens will be discussed in greater detail below.

Referring now to Figures 2a—2e, the available moves to the players are identified with reference to the starting position of the player as illustrated in the drawings. For example, as shown in Figure 2a the king can move in any direction to a square adjacent the square on which it is located at the beginning of the move. There are thus only eight squares to which a king can move as represented by the eight arrows of Figure 2a. The queen, on the other hand, as illustrated in Figure 2b, can move over the same range of directions, namely forward and backward along the file, left and right along the row, and in each direction along each diagonal, the terms "forward" and "backward", "left" and "right" being identified with respect to the position in which a player is facing. As can be seen from Figure 2b the queen may move up to four squares from the original position in any of the directions indicated. By contrast, the moves available to the bishop illustrated in Figure 2c comprise only the four moves along the diagonal in each direction and traversing up to four squares, whilst the moves available to the rook comprise moves in each of the four directions along the row or file intersecting on the square at which the rook is originally located. Finally, the moves available to the knight illustrated in Figure 2c comprise the L-shape moves conventionally assigned to the knight so that the knight can move to one of eight squares in an approximately octagonal pattern around its original position.

The game may be played by two, three or four players, the objective in each case being to transfer the players to the stronghold directly opposite across the transfer centre line. If two players are to play, they may elect to occupy opposite strongholds or adjacent strongholds,

although a different game will ensue depending on the original election. The first player to occupy the opposing stronghold with every piece in a corresponding position to that of the original position as discussed above is the winner.

Selection of which player is to start may be made in accordance with a rota, by throwing dice, drawing lots or other random or pseudo random selection process. The normal moves available to the players are as discussed above in relation to Figures 2a to 2c and the usual constraints on chess players apply, that is each player, with the exception of the knight, may only move (up to the limit of the available range) providing the squares along its path are unoccupied. With the exception of the knight's move, no piece may jump over another piece along the desired path of movement whether that piece belongs to the same player or to an opponent. All pieces may move, into, out of or through a stronghold as part of a normal move. It will be noticed that one of the bishops plays on the light coloured diagonal and the other on the diagonal constituted by the dark squares.

As mentioned above, because the game is a positional or manoeuvring game the rules do not provide for pieces to capture another piece. With the exception of the queen the player's pieces can only be moved over the board along otherwise unoccupied paths. The queen, on the other hand, may displace an opponents piece if it is in the immediate vicinity of the queen. That is to say if the opponents piece is on a square immediately adjacent or occupied by the queen then the queen may be moved onto that square and the opponents piece moved back to its original or starting position. If this position is already occupied the displaced piece must be moved to the nearest position to the rear or side of the starting position providing this position can be reached by a normal move. If a choice of such positions exists then the player to whom the piece belongs may select a preferred position.

The rules provide that at the commencement of the game a plurality of "option" tokens are placed over the "option" squares 16, 17 on the board: if a player's piece lands on an option square 16 or 17, that player may elect to make his next move in a different manner from normal or to take one of the options set out below. First, the player may take the option token from that square and save it for use at a subsequent stage in the game to play what will be called a "forced move" option, that is to force an opponent to move an opposing piece out of his way. Any number of option tokens may be collected in this way, but they must be maintained in view of the other players. As an alternative the next move after landing on an option square may be a "long" move, that is a move played by the king, queen, bishop or rook in any available direction for as far as possible, and beyond the normal maximum of four squares if desired.

The "forced move" option, which can only be elected if an option token is held, is made by

indicating to an opponent the move which the player wishes to make, with a demand for a piece blocking that move to be removed. The opposing player must then remove the blocking piece out of the way by the smallest number of squares necessary and in a direction available to that player as a normal move. This movement does not count as the opponents move and the player exercising the forced move option must then make his move and replace the option token on the board. The option token may be located on any of the option squares 16 or 17. If no option square is available the option token may be placed in a temporary store and put onto the first option square which becomes free during the following progress of the game. It is also open to the player to make use of two options simultaneously. Only one "forced move" option may be undertaken, but a forced move option may be exercised with a long move option, with the constraint that a piece already on its target stronghold cannot be forced to move. It is the responsibility of the player exercising the forced move option to ensure that a legitimate move is available to the opponent when making a demand for a forced move.

Once a player's piece has been moved to its required position, namely on the target stronghold, it can no longer be captured by the opponents queen and it is no longer vulnerable to the forced move unless it is moved subsequently out of the target stronghold for any reason.

Various different modifications may be incorporated to the rules such as, for example, allowing the players to make different moves from those specified. For example the king may be allowed to move two or more squares at a time rather than the one conventionally allowed, or a dice may be thrown to determine the number of squares which may be traversed by one of, or a combination of the player's pieces, the knights move counting as two squares.

CLAIMS

1. A board game comprising a board having markings over the whole of its area indicating a plurality of player's positions, a plurality of different player's pieces to be moved over the board in accordance with the rules of the game, each different player's piece being assigned a characteristic move, and the board being further provided with means identifying at least two areas within its boundary constituting sets of player's positions for each of at least two sets of player's pieces, being starting and/or target areas for pieces during play, the rules providing that each set of player's pieces is to be moved alternately, by means of the said characteristic moves, from its starting position to a position on the target area.

2. A board game as claimed in Claim 1, in which the player's positions comprise a plurality of square or rectangular areas in a grid or chequered array with adjacent squares being of a

different colour or being otherwise distinguishable.

3. A board game as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, in which the said starting and target areas are spaced from the edges of the board allowing player's pieces to be moved to positions entirely around the target area.

4. A board game as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 3 in which the player's pieces are conventional chess pieces to which are assigned substantially the same moves as they can make in chess, the rules providing constraints on the movements such as a limit on the maximum number of squares which can be traversed by each piece in one move.

5. A board game as claimed in any preceding Claim, in which the player's pieces are the conventional chess pieces comprising knight, rook, bishop, king and queen.

6. A board game as claimed in any preceding Claim, in which the board is additionally provided with means defining a plurality of player's positions as a subset of the first defined set of player's positions having a suitable identification such as a characteristic colour or representative indicia, and the rules provide for a variation in the constraints placed on a move made by a player's piece from a player's position in that subset.

7. A board game as claimed in Claim 6, in which the said constraint variations include a

removal of the maximum limit of player's positions or squares which can be traversed at the next move providing that piece is moved on the turn of the player concerned immediately following that on which the piece was moved onto that player's position.

8. A board game as claimed in Claim 6 or Claim 7, in which the said constraint variations include removal of an opponents piece blocking the intended path of the player's piece in question.

9. A board game as claimed in any preceding Claim, further including tokens which can be taken up when a player's piece lands on one of the said additionally marked player's positions or squares constituting the said sub-set thereof.

10. A board game as claimed in any preceding Claim, in which the board is provided with indicia representing two hundred and fifty six player's positions in sixteen rows and sixteen columns thereof.

11. A board game as claimed in any preceding Claim, in which the rules provide that one piece only in each set of player's pieces is permitted to capture an opponent's piece by moving onto the player's position occupied thereby.

12. A board game substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to, and as shown in, the accompanying drawings.